

Appl. No. 10/612,866  
Amdt. Dated February 12, 2007  
Reply to Office Action of December 12, 2006

Attorney Docket No. 02-2453

### REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Office Action of December 12, 2006 has been carefully reviewed and this Response addresses the Examiner's concerns.

#### I. Status of the Claims

Claims 1, 3-24, and 29 are pending in this present Application prior to this Response. Claims 25-28 have been withdrawn from consideration at this time. Claims 1, 3-16, 19-22, and 29 have been rejected. Claims 17, 18, 23, and 24 have been objected to but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. In this Response, independent claims 1, 22 and 29 amended to more clearly claim the invention over the prior art references; dependent claims 17, 18, 23, and 24 have been rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of the base claims; dependent claim 6 has been added to now depend from new independent claim 17; and new dependent claims 30-33 have been added.

#### II. Claim Rejections

(a) On pages 2 and 3 of the Office action, claims 1, 3-8, 12-16, and 29 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 402037954.

(b) On page 4 of the Office action, claims 9-11 and 19-21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 402037954 in view of JP 2-274846.

#### III. Allowable Subject Matter

On page 4 of the Office action, claims 17, 18, 23, and 24 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

#### IV. Telephonic Interview with Examiner

Applicant's attorney, Péter J. Borghetti, appreciates Examiner Tran's granting time for the telephonic interview of January 4, 2007 regarding the above-captioned patent application.

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V. Amendments to Claims and New Claims

Independent claims 1, 22, and 29 have been amended to more clearly claim the invention over the prior art references. In particular, the preambles have been amended to limit the claim method to "continuous casting". Applicants assert that the amendments to the preambles do not raise new issues that would require further consideration and/or search or "new matter" since the claim limitation of "continuous casting" is recited in original claim 6 and Examiner Tran searched Class 164, Subclass 444, which includes over 100 patents that have claims directed to continuous castings. Therefore, Examiner Tran's previous searches are adequate to identify prior art references to examine amended claims 1, 22, and 29.

Dependent claims 17, 18, 23, and 24 have been rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claims.

Dependent claim 6 has been amended to now depend from new independent claim 17.

New dependent claims 30-33 have been added, which are duplicate claims to the original dependent claims 17, 18, 23, and 24, respectively.

VI. Support in the Specification for Claims 1 and 29 Amendments

Support for Independent Claims 1, 22, and 29 recitals of "continuous casting" in the preamble can be found in, for example, paragraph [0037] and Figure 20 of Applicants' specification.

VII. Rejections under 35 USC §103

In view of the amended independent claims 1, 22, and 29 presented in this Response, Applicants respectfully request that the 35 U.S.C. 103(a) for claims 1, 3-16, 19-21, and 29 be withdrawn because JP 402037954 and JP 2-274846 do not singularly or combined disclose, teach, or suggest the limitations of claims directed to "continuous casting". Further, new claims 30-33, which depend from amended independent claim 1, are also allowable since they depend from an allowable claim.

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Dependent claim 6, which now depends from new independent claim 17, is allowable since it depends from an allowable claim.

Thus, in view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants assert that this present Application is in condition for allowance, which action is earnestly solicited. The Examiner is invited to call Applicants' counsel at (724) 337-4185 at the time of review of this Response, in order to have answered any remaining questions and to expedite issuance of the allowable subject matter.

The Director of Patents and Trademarks is authorized to charge Deposit Account No.01-1000, Order No. 02-2453 the large entity fees for four (4) additional independent claims and four (4) additional total claims. The Director of Patents and Trademarks is also authorized to charge any additional fees, or to credit overpayment, to Deposit Account No.01-1000, Order No. 02-2453.

Respectfully submitted,  
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